

THROWING SOME LIGHT ON LOCAL AUTHORITY PERFINs

Notes from Mr.E.D.Chambers

From time to time, I get the impression that members are, understandably, vague about the different titles given to local authorities. Before 1974 there was a period of reasonable stability in England and Wales, and the whole area was divided up as follows:-

County Boroughs - (all purpose authorities)

Counties - divided into Municipal Boroughs; Urban Districts;
Rural Districts; sometimes Parishes.

So far as I know, the only exceptions were the area formerly covered by the Greater London Council (only formed in 1965), which was divided into London Boroughs; The City of London; and the Isles of Scilly, whose council was rather like that of a rural district but with some of the powers of a county borough.

There were many boundary changes before 1974, particularly when county boroughs were expanded and took over parts of adjacent counties; also at least one rearrangement of counties. Two counties (Huntingdonshire and the Soke of Peterborough) were amalgamated, at the same time as two others (Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely), with a simultaneous unrelated boundary change.

For various reasons some towns or even villages were allowed to call themselves "City", and the council would then call itself a City Council. Usually, but not always, such a town or village had a cathedral.

In Scotland, where the drastic reorganisation took place a year earlier in 1973, the titles were, and are, different.

None of the above is relevant after 1974.

There is another word that some councils favour in their title:- "Corporation", but so far as I know this means nothing in particular. The dictionary definition of Municipal Corporation is, 'civic authorities of borough, town or city', and the definition of Council is, 'local administrative body of towns, cities or administrative county'.

I hope this rather rough and ready summary will give some enlightenment to those who collect local authority perfins.

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